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(Sentence excised from paragraph II, 3
to permit declassification)

November 2, 1962

MEMORANDUM FOR:

The President

Mr. Bundy has suggested that I give you a brief summary of the strengths and weaknesses of our present broadcasting program to Cuba, as well as contingency plans for stepping it up should that be necessary.

I. PRESENT ASSESSMENT

- A. VOA shortwave is now on 33 different frequencies on a 24 hour basis. Linked to this are two commercial shortwave stations.
- B. It is estimated by CIA that there are 1.3 million radio sets in Cuba, of which 260,000 have a shortwave receiving capacity.
- C. Commencing at 7:00 p.m. every night, nine medium-wave U.S. stations are linked to the VOA network and broadcast until 6:00 a.m. Medium-wave radio signals carry for much greater distances at night than during the daytime. This is because the signals bounce off the E layer of the ionosphere, which is not present during the daytime hours. For example, if you are driving in your car during the daytime and listening to WTOP, a powerful 50 kilowatt station, it begins to fade when you get on the other side of Baltimore. However, if you listen at night, the signal remains clear for a much greater distance until you run into interference from other stations on adjoining frequencies. Another example -- at night it is often possible to pick up stations from Chicago and other cities even further west.

The effectiveness of medium-wave daytime broadcasting is determined by location and signal strength. The maximum daytime range is about 100 miles and usually much less. The British Ambassador's report of hearing some English language stations in Cuba during the day is probably attributable to intermittent atmospheric conditions.

II. POSSIBLE ESCALATIONS IN RADIO BROADCASTING

The FCC and Voice of America carefully selected the nine stations that we currently have broadcasting to Cuba as the most effective. Three further moves could be made if desired:

- 1. WGBS and WMIE, Miami, and WKWF, Key West, could be put on a 24 hour basis. We believe that they would agree to this if Mr. Salinger were to

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call them again as he did at the outset. FCC technicians say that the results would be minimal in Cuba, but there would be some daytime audibility.

2. WGN is a 50 kilowatt clear channel in Chicago, owned by the Chicago Tribune. They would be willing to put it at our disposal during the nighttime hours. FCC estimates it would have some audibility in Cuba, although it would not be extensive.

3. Radio Caribe, belonging to the government of the Dominican Republic, has a transmitter located on the northern coast of that country.

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 It might be possible to put Radio Caribe on the VOA network. However, this would raise certain diplomatic problems that might not be worth the effort.

III. NEW FACILITIES PRESENTLY PLANNED

A. As soon as the crisis broke, the Navy began moving a 50 kilowatt medium-wave station to the Dry Tortugas at the end of the Florida Keys. This station will be operational on November 9, and I recommend that we link it to VOA at that time. At night this will put the most powerful signal of all into Cuba. During the daytime it should also put a fair signal into Havana because it is 50 kilowatt and it looks right across the water at the closest point to Cuba.

B. Similarly, as soon as the crisis began, USIA moved to place a 50 kilowatt medium-wave transmitter into Marathon, which is 50 miles northeast of Key West. This will be operational November 14 and I would recommend linking it to the VOA network at that time. It will have basically the same effect in Cuba as the Navy station, although it will be on a different frequency.

Putting these two stations on the air may possibly involve violations of the North American Radio Broadcasting Agreement. USIA lawyers are preparing a report on this.

C. General Lansdale is in charge of the preparation of a stratovision capability which will be operational about November 9. This is an airborne television program on one of the three vacant Havana channels. Technicians estimate it would take 15 to 20 days before the Cubans could perfect a jamming technique. USIA is preparing a contingency television program which would lean heavily on your speech and follow the developments in the crisis from that time up to the day that the program is shown on Cuban television.

As the time approaches for the operational capacity of the two new radio transmitters and the stratovision, I will, of course, check before putting them on the air.

Donald M. Wilson
Acting Director